

Reiter Foothills Recreation Planning Committee
Meeting # 9
January 28 | 6 to 8:30 p.m.

Meeting Purpose: Review and discuss Committee member's mapped ideas for recreation opportunities in Reiter Foothills. Present DNR recreational program project costs and funding information

Welcome:

- Review agenda
- General housekeeping items

DNR Update:

Day to Day Management – David Way

The recent storm events resulted in a landslide just north of Reiter Road that began at a BPA tower. The road is now closed and the BPA tower has been repaired and is stable.

Comment:

- *This event should be considered a major landslide with regard to the amount of sediment delivery resulting from the slide.*

Outreach – Candace Johnson

Candace joined committee member Ted Jackson at a Gold Bar City Council Meeting in early January, and gave a brief update to the Council. Meetings are scheduled soon with the Mayor of Gold Bar and emergency responders (Fire Districts and County Sheriff), and with the Forest Service (USFS). DNR has contacted the mayors of Index, Monroe, and Sultan regarding any questions or preferences for how to receive DNR Reiter Foothills planning information and receive input from them.

Commissioner Visit – Candace Johnson

Commissioner Goldmark visited DNR's Northwest Region last week. Staff had an opportunity to talk briefly about Reiter Foothills, the history of ORV use, the project and timeline. It is something we will be talking about in more detail with executive management as our process moves along and as executive management is available.

Mapped Recreation Opportunities

Committee members presented their user groups' perspectives on the top ideas and concepts for safe, sustainable recreation in the Reiter Foothills area consistent with the DNR's trust mandates. The 5-minute Committee member presentations included mapped outlines of the recreational activities, specific project concepts, and recreation management approaches. The Committee presentations were developed by individual members' based on their consultation with user groups, the Committee's prior review of DNR suitability maps, and public comments submitted to the DNR.

Motorcycle Riding:

The Committee member working with the motorcycle user community was unable to meet with the club in January; that meeting is scheduled for February 4. The Committee member will share the Committee's early recreational concepts with the members.

Mapped recreational opportunity: It is important that the Reiter Foothills areas are divided into motorized and non-motorized use areas. Some of the recreational uses do not mix well and dividing the areas can help reduce conflicts between user groups. Where there is existing motorized use it should continue, with some expansion to the east. It is obvious that improvements are needed to help protect against resource damage.

Specific project concepts: Create a trailhead and camping staging area for motorcycle events and competitions in the upper staging area currently located under the powerlines.

Questions and Comments:

- *Does motorized use include all types of motorized uses together? Can the different types of use coexist?*

Committee Presenter response: Yes, the different types of motorized use can coexist. The important thing is to provide the different types of user experiences through exclusive use and mixed use trail systems.

- *Perhaps certain trails should be designated for particular kinds of use within the same area.*
- *Some motorized trails can be used by different user groups to connect to areas where trails are designed for a single type of use (i.e. designed specifically for motorcycle, 4x4, etc.)*
- *Are there any specific locations where you would like to have motorized facilities?*

Committee Presenter response: Yes. Motorcyclists have organized events and fun days scheduled several times throughout the year. Camping and staging areas are very important for these activities. These recreational activities currently rely on the upper staging area under the powerlines. This location could work well as a trailhead with camping and staging for their events.

Horseback Riding:

The Backcountry Horsemen user group often uses other landscapes in the northwest region, particularly the Harry Osborne Forest. The group's interest is in working with DNR for possible use of the Reiter area if horseback riding trails are developed. The horsemen are concerned about the impact to the environment that ORV use can cause, as well as the large amount of funding resources necessary to build and maintain an ORV area.

Mapped recreational opportunity:

- Provide a non-motorized, horseback riding staging area adjacent to the Wallace Falls State Park trailhead using the powerline area on DNR land.
- Connect trails and roads to Wallace Lake area for non-motorized use.
- West side of Wallace Falls is ideal for a non motorized trail system, including horsetrails.

Specific project concepts:

- Install a gate system
- Access through the powerline area should continue

Management approaches:

- Limited ORV use particularly during wet times of the year, to protect resources (seasonal closures)
- Provide additional resources to manage all uses
- Close some of the lower areas and open higher areas that are more suitable with regard to water quality
- DNR needs to add some teeth to enforcement, and ticket people who are not behaving properly. For example, The USFS requires weed-free feed, and there is a substantial fine (\$10,000) for non-compliance

Questions and Comments:

- *Would the State Park need to be open for horseback riding?*
Horseback Riding Response: The State Park should be open to horse use if it is dispersed and not just on State Park land.
- *Are you saying the horse people don't want to come to Reiter?*
Horseback Riding Response: Not the way it is now with all of the motorized use.
- *If there was a non motorized trailhead adjacent to the State Park trailhead, would you prefer it be exclusive to horses?*
Horseback Riding Response: No, it could be open to other non motorized uses as well. Some separation may be necessary for providing adequate room for horse trailers, stalls, feed areas, and so on. This area may be difficult to develop as a trailhead due to easement issues with the BPA right of way and other ownership, but it appears to be possible.

Recreational Fishing:

The Walker Valley tour was informative. The concerns shared tonight are not so much about ORV use, but with the impacts to the environment as a result of ongoing forest management (working forest) activities. There is not a concern with DNR ORV trails if the monies are available to manage appropriately at Reiter. The primary concern is sediment load in water.

Management approaches:

- Sufficient funding to manage recreation uses

Mapped recreational opportunity:

- Segregate incompatible uses into different areas
- Create improvements to shore access along the Skykomish River, including small parking and access path

Questions and Comments:

- *Do you see any possibility of developing the parcel of DNR land on the south side of the Skykomish River for fishing access?*
Committee Presenter response: Yes, this area currently gets a fair amount of recreational fishing use. Improvements to shore access would be supported by recreational fishing interests.

- *Perhaps a small parking area and access path may suffice*
- *Perhaps also include a restroom*

Mountain Bike:

The mountain bike group is interested in using existing trails, but also in developing opportunities for aggressive downhill riding and free riding. Uses like this do not require a lot of area, but requires a fair amount of vertical drop. Various types of riding should be included, including single track loop, downhill, and free ride opportunities. Mountain bike uses mix well with other uses including other non motorized uses and some motorized uses at road intersections or facilities.

Mapped recreational opportunity:

- Cross country trails could include longer routes, between 8 and 20 miles in length and offering a variety of views is desirable.
- Areas of particular use in Reiter Foothills include Wallace Falls State Park and the area immediately adjacent.
- Other recommendations include site uses and trails with consideration to buffering the wilderness area

Specific project concepts:

- Kiosks at trailheads

Management approaches:

- Appropriate signage
- Trails must be sustainable and require minimal maintenance
- Uses must be designed considering sensitive areas

Questions and Comments:

- *Buffering wilderness areas is prohibited by law.*
- *Wilderness isn't DNR land and any trails on these lands would need to be developed in cooperation with the USFS.*
- *The terrain of the area itself provides a natural buffer to the wilderness area*
- *Are there areas on DNR land where sanctioned downhill/free riding now occurs?*
- Committee Presenter response: As far as downhill/free riding on DNR land, there is only one area now officially provided in the state. As a result, most manmade features such as jumps, obstacles, and trails are built without land manager approval. This presents a liability concern to most land managers
- *How is the liability different on that sanctioned area open for downhill/free riding?*
Committee Presenter response: Not sure of the specific agreement. It is not open at all times and there are permits in place for the events that are held.
- *How large of an area is sufficient to construct a free ride or downhill course?*
Committee Presenter response: There is no set amount for size. In some cases, these opportunities can be developed in very small areas such as the Colonnade Mountain Bike Park in Seattle that was constructed under Interstate 5. In this setting, 5-10 acres may be sufficient. Some users like to "session" by riding a downhill/free-ride trail and then heading back up and riding it again.

- *Maybe we could use the Stevens Pass snowboard park as an example of where users must watch an informational video before they can use the area.*

Hiking/Non Motorized:

Several Committee members worked as a team to prepare their presentation, this included intensive amounts of time looking at the Reiter and Walker Valley areas from the field. The ideas presented to the Committee were shared with several environmental organizations who have concerns about ORV use.

Observations in regard to the Walker Valley tour include: ORV trail miles are very expensive, there are many sections of trail that are not hardened and the environmental damage is significant, and there is sediment delivery in some areas

Mapped recreational opportunity:

In attempting to equalize uses, these recommendations are suggested by specific geographically defined zones. To facilitate management, topographic features are used to separate the zones:

- Zone 1 – north of the Wallace River and east of Wallace Falls State Park – Non motorized
- Zone 2 – west of Wallace Falls State Park – environmental protection zone. Not open to motorized use. Open to non-motorized uses.
- Zone 3 – between May Creek and Wallace River – available for horseback and mountain biking.
- Zone 4 – Hogarty Creek to May Creek – mountain bike free riding. Trail to Lake Isabel reconstructed for hiking. Non-motorized trailhead at current gravel pit staging area. Provide access for non-motorized use. Pedestrian/bike bridge should be built across May Creek.
- Zone 5 – motorized use for quads and motorcycle – Campground trailhead should be included. Bounded on the east by the aquifer recharge area.
- Zone 6 - The DNR road should be gated at the County road, with use allowed only for maintenance to protect the Index aquifer recharge area.
- Zone 7 – the only current access is a trail and climbing path along Index Wall. This area should be set aside for hiking and climbing use, and potentially be annexed into the State Park.
- Zone 8 – east and above the second locked gate. Non-motorized use. Access through section 7.

Management approaches:

DNR policies and guidelines have been considered, including the Policy for Sustainable Forests, Multiple Use Act, trust obligations, financial resource availability. If funds become available, priorities in order are:

- Enforcement is the highest and first priority
- Mitigation and restoration for degradation
- After that, can discuss wish list for trails and ongoing uses
- Include seasonal trail closures Nov 1- May 1
- Funding should be split evenly between motorized and non-motorized uses
- Enforcement should occur all open week-end days and three days per week in summer

Specific project concepts:

- Develop written agreement between DNR and Snohomish County regarding enforcement
- Brochures/communications for user groups
- Install sedimentation trapping to ensure resource protection, particularly in road areas

Questions and Comments:

- *Could the DNR Road that you suggest be gated in Zone 7 be used for access to trails in other areas?*

Committee Presenter response: We believe the road should only be available for very limited access. The concern is that it is difficult to totally restrict ORV use to the road and designated trails – there could potentially be off trail use. A gate offers DNR the opportunity to make enforcement easier.

- *In your proposal, are you recommending that there be no 4x4 use in the whole area?*
Committee Presenter response: Yes. It is our opinion that the 4x4s cause the most extreme amount of environmental damage.

- *Is there any documentation of degradation of drinking water?*

- *The Index water systems manager was at our committee meeting and she had no documentation regarding degradation of water quality. It is a very emotional issue and important, but it is important to look past the current situation and plan for managed recreation.*

- *Where would you like to see a “no shooting” ordinance?*

Committee Presenter response: The whole area should be no shooting. A no-shooting zone should be established covering the entire Reiter Foothills area

City of Sultan:

Recreational opportunities for ORV uses in the Snohomish County area have been reduced as a result of the creation of the Wild Sky Wilderness Area. Dividing the Reiter area amongst different use types is actually very unequal. The City’s hope is that recreational use opportunities can be increased in the Reiter Foothills area to compensate for activities that are not permitted in the adjacent wilderness areas. Some recommendations include:

Specific project concepts:

- Access must be improved – including access from the north
- Additional opportunities should be provided for families, including vehicular access for car camping
- Create more opportunities for the types of recreational uses that are already available at the Reiter Foothills
- Plan for multiple use in the Reiter Foothills in context of the overall recreation use opportunities provided on all lands located in Snohomish county

Management approaches:

- If areas become inaccessible as resource management activities occur (e.g., harvesting) other areas should be made available
- DNR should solicit the use of volunteers and local resources in developing and maintaining facilities

- It should be noted that non-motorized trails can also be expensive

Question:

- *Does Sultan have any data related to the economic impact of recreation?*
Committee Presenter response: That doesn't seem to be the driving force for their interest at Reiter.

City of Monroe:

The City has recently completed work on a comprehensive park and open space plan. The City interests include:

- Monroe's surroundings are important to the city, as it develops and shares information
- Connected trails are important, so that users can experience a variety of interests, both within the city of Monroe and between cities.
- Opportunities should be expanded in the Reiter Foothills
- Recreation activities are of interest to businesses that benefit as recreationists visit the City. If outdoor recreation can attract an additional demographic of people, the City will benefit.

Questions and Comments:

- *What type of demographic is attracted to Monroe businesses now?*
Committee Presenter response: RV campers and skiers primarily.
- *Monroe could be the Steelhead fishing attraction of the world*

ATV Riding and Motorized Uses:

Reiter Foothills is a major ORV area. It is the only area for riding within a 100 mile radius of King and Snohomish Counties. There is a large ATV population in these counties (600,000 licensed ORV users) and the demand is increasing. There has been over-use and over-concentration in the Reiter area which should be addressed in the recreational plan. Increasing motorized use in Reiter will also offer economic gains to local communities.

Specific project concept:

- Identify and build a trail system
- Open more of the area for ORV use so the use is not so concentrated (e.g. Capital Forest non-motorized trails appear to get minimal use)

Management approach:

- DNR should consider this area being managed or operated by an outside group, because of the size of the project.

Questions and Comments:

- *Why is this the only ORV area within this radius? Why are areas closed?*
- *At Walker Valley, observation included locations where trail braiding is happening, signs are destroyed. How do ORV groups ensure this will not continue to happen?*
- *There does not seem to be sufficient education happening at Reiter to keep riders on trails, even in the sanctioned areas like Walker Valley.*
Committee Presenter response: Reiter Trail Watch does education, hosts work parties mitigating damage, and talks with ORV riders.

- *How would ORV people feel about shooting being allowed in this area?*
Committee Presenter response: If shooters had an area to do so responsibly, it could coexist.
- *When you talk about ORV uses having a greater share of Reiter, do you mean share of the land or the funding?*
Committee Presenter response: Because ORV users contribute much of the funding through tabs and fees, the funding should not necessarily be split evenly among all users.

Snohomish County Parks:

The County has been approached in the past to play a more active role at the Reiter area and specifically with regard to motorized recreation. Five years ago, the County set aside money for work at Reiter prior to a plan being in place; the funding is not available at this time. At the end of this process, DNR and the County Parks can discuss collaboration opportunities including patrols (parks enforcement) and capital funding.

Questions and Comments:

- *Is the money Snohomish County Parks set aside no longer available?*
County Response: That is correct. Snohomish County Parks budget no longer has an allocation of \$200,000 in capital monies for Reiter. There may be additional county budget cuts to come in the future.

4-Wheel Driving:

Reiter offers an opportunity for multiple uses; many ORV users participate in many other activities. The ORV clubs want to keep the area open for use, and continue to educate and work with people. Many organized groups spend a lot of their own time advocating for responsible use and access for 4x4s. Much of the concern is the lack of 4x4 opportunities in the northwest. Walker Valley is the only 4x4 area in *Pacific Northwest 4 Wheel Drive Association Region 1*.

Mapped recreational opportunities:

- Northern portion of Reiter – more suitable for non-motorized uses
- In the southeast portion of Reiter create manageable trails – close those that are not appropriate.
- Would like to see motorized mixed use in the whole area that is currently being used
- The area west of Wallace Falls State Park should be non-motorized due to the limited access for vehicles
- Create staging area off the “Middle Road” – build appropriate bridges or water crossings – use as a second staging area

Specific project concepts:

- Camping opportunity is important at trailheads

Management approaches

- Constant education and enforcement is required

Questions and Comments:

- *From a technical perspective, how do you prevent trenching and side erosion?*
- Committee Presenter response: In some areas, rock is installed in the trenched areas. In some cases, the trail is re-routed.

City of Gold Bar

The City has been unable to develop recommendations in time for this meeting due to recent winter storm events. The Committee member will provide a presentation of the City's recommendations at the February meeting.

DNR Recreation Project Costs and Funding Information

Lisa Anderson, from the DNR Division office in Olympia, presented information regarding recreation general project costs and funding information.

- Recreation funding is generally categorized as maintenance and operations, or capital funding
- The state budget runs on a two-year cycle (biennium). The legislature typically addresses the state budget towards the end of the legislative session. The end of the session this year will be in April.
- DNR requests money from the legislature – both current level (carry-forward) and additional funding (enhancement). For this legislative session, we requested carry forward funding and an enhancement of \$1.2 million.
- DNR needs a sustainable funding source for recreation. This issue has been identified by the legislature and has resulted in the Sustainable Recreation Work Group. One of the key challenges given this committee by the legislature is to examine DNR recreation funding.
- Recreation program summary statewide
 - 143 recreation sites
 - 1000+ miles of designated trails
 - 25 permanent staff
 - Approximately 2.2 million acres forested uplands
- Annual Recreation Program Funding
 - The specifics of the program funding is provided on the handout - *E-News Special Budget Issue* (which can be found on the DNR web site at www.dnr.wa.gov/Publications/amp_rec_recreation_news_december2008.pdf)
- Region recreation funding and sites handout (see Attachment 1 below)

Review Action Items and Next Steps for Committee's Recommendation Development

Prior to the February 18th committee meeting, members will:

- Review the Reiter Foothills Recreational Planning Area Survey of Public Comments to identify other project concepts, management approaches, or recommendations on use areas for all user types.
- DNR will review Committee members' recommended mapped recreational uses, project concepts and management approaches presented at the January meeting along with stakeholder and public comments regarding Reiter Foothills Recreational Areas, and the DNR suitability analysis maps. DNR will put together several conceptual packages

of recommendations for the committee to review and discuss at the February Committee meeting.

Follow Up Related to Wild Sky Wilderness Area

- Clarification that the 1990 *Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA)* provides for wheelchair access to Wilderness Areas. Additional information related to the ADA can be found at <http://www.ada.gov>. A complete copy of the 1964 *Wilderness Act* can be found at <http://wilderness.nps.gov/document/wildernessAct.pdf>.

Attachment 1

Northwest Region Recreation Operating Funds	
Annual Recreation Program Funding (non-grant) = \$200,000*	
<i>Recreation Sites</i>	
Walker Valley Trailhead	
Reflection Ponds Trailhead	
Samish Island Day Use Area	
WC Dearinger Campground	
Ashland Lakes Trailhead	
Beaver Plant Lake Campground	
Big Greider Lake Campground	
Blanchard Hills Trailhead	
Boulder Lake Campground	
Boulder Lake Trailhead	
Cutthroat Lakes Campground	
Greider Lake Trailhead	
Les Hilde Trailhead	
Lily Lake Campground	
Little Greider Lake Campground	
Lizard Lake Campground	
Lower Ashland Lake Campground	
Twin Falls Lake Campground	
Upper Ashland Lake Campground	
Upper Blanchard Hills Trailhead	
Cattle Point	
Cattle Point Lighthouse	
Lummi Island Campground	
Pelican Beach Campground	
Strawberry Island Campground	
<i>Recreation Trails (approx mileage)</i>	
Walker Valley Trails (36 miles)	
Blanchard Trails (3 miles)	
Boulder Lake Trail (4 miles)	
Greider Ridge Trails (3 miles)	
Les Hilde Trails (40 miles)	
Mt. Pilchuck Trails (17 miles)	
Cypress Island Trails (18 miles)	
Cattle Point (.3 mile)	

*Note: Funding varies from year to year

Northwest Region Grant Funding

The region competes for and receives additional grant funding for maintenance & operations (M & O) of recreation trails and facilities, education & enforcement (E & E) activities, and recreation facility development and/or renovation. This grant money is obtained through a competitive process and is not guaranteed year to year.

Recently the region has averaged approximately:

- \$90,500/ year of grant maintenance funding for ORV trails at Walker Valley
- \$126,000/ year of grant maintenance funding for non-motorized trails and non-highway road facilities throughout the region
- \$50,000/ year for Education & Enforcement (E & E) funding for use throughout the region

Recent development grants received:

- In '08 - \$325,000 for Phase 1 development of Samish Overlook (WWRP grant)

Facility and Trail Maintenance Costs

The costs of facility and trail maintenance activities vary across the state due to many factors; location, amount of use, season(s) of use, site conditions, and type of use. Current maintenance costs are estimated to be approximately:

- \$3500- \$4000 per mile, per year for ORV trails at Walker Valley
- \$1000-\$1100 per mile, per year for non-motorized trails in the region

Facility and Trail Development Costs

Costs of recreation facility development are based on the size, type, materials and location of the facility. Much of the cost of constructing new trails is in the cost of new bridge design and installation. Some recent construction estimates include:

- \$250,000- \$975,000 Trailhead (25-80 Parking Spaces)
- \$1,400,000 -2,800,000 Campground (25-50 Campsites)
- \$30,000-\$100,000 Trail Bridge